

23rd Congressional District Veterans Speak Directly with Congressman Rodriguez and Veterans Committee Chairman, Bob Filner

(Washington, D.C) - Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez hosted a telephone Town Hall meeting on Wednesday evening with 1,692 veterans participating from across the 23rd District of Texas. Joining Rodriguez for the Vets Tele-Town Hall was Congressman Bob Filner, Chairman of the House Veteran's Affairs.

As a member of the House Committee on Veteran's Affairs Congressman Rodriguez brought together Chairman Bob Filner and a representative from the Veteran's Benefits Administration to hear from 23rd congressional district veterans, and to address specific concerns and questions related to veteran's benefits and federal legislation impacting veterans.

Congressman Rodriguez and Chairman Filner discussed improving access to health care for veterans across the 23rd congressional district, including many rural Texas veterans who have to drive hundreds of miles to receive care at a VA facility. Additionally, the Congressmen spoke about fighting to increase VA funding for years and finally succeeding in adding \$3.7 billion to the 2008 VA budget, the largest increase in the history of the agency. The recently passed Veterans Health Care Improvement Act of 2007, which included language introduced by Congressman Rodriguez to expand the Veterans' Administration (VA) mental health services, was also part of the conversation.

Veterans from virtually every region of the 23rd congressional district participated in the call, including groups from San Antonio, Del Rio, Eagle Pass, Pecos and El Paso. Some veterans even organized their local contacts and participated in the Vets Tele-Town Hall as a group. In Pecos City, Texas (Reeves County), Mayor Richard Alligood invited local veterans to the Pecos City Hall to listen and participate in to the call with the House Veterans Affairs Committee members. Every veteran on the call had the opportunity to interact with the Congressmen through live questions, emails, recorded messages or by participating in a live poll during the call.

Following the Tele-Town Hall Congressman Rodriguez said, "This congressional district encompasses over 700 miles between El Paso and San Antonio, the Vets Tele-Town Hall was an opportunity to discuss the issues of importance to veterans throughout the entire district and gave them an opportunity to communicate their needs directly to the Chairman and Veteran's Benefits Representatives. I look forward to continuing my work on the House Committee on Veterans Affairs and to continuing to help veterans access the benefits they deserve."